



LAF

Local Access Forum Essex

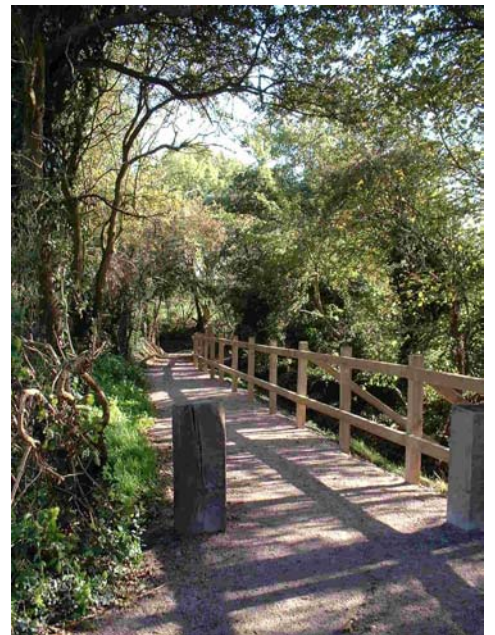
ANNUAL REPORT

2005 – 2006

ANNUAL REPORT

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CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

I hope you find the third Annual Review of the Essex Local Access Forum informative. It gives details of our activities and some of the issues we have tackled over the last twelve months.

The third year of the forum has seen us build on our roll as statutory consultees for a wide range of subjects as well as finding areas we as a forum want to discuss and act upon and other areas being added to our roll by Government.

I again would like to publicly thank past and present members, as well as Essex County Council PROW Officers, for making the Essex LAF the success it is. All have given many hours and much effort over the last year working together for those who work in and visit the Essex countryside. Special thanks must go to Merryl for all her work to keep everything on track.

Last year I stated that one of our main aims for the next year must be to ensure that the County Council makes good progress on the rights of way improvement plan. With the production of surveys things are starting to move but a close eye needs to be kept to ensure it is delivered on time and is a useful effective document. I hope the forum will benefit from an increased commitment from Essex County Council policy makers to support its work as I do feel in the past this has been lacking. The publishing of last year's annual report in September 2006 was clearly not acceptable and hopefully will not be repeated this year.

I would like to encourage anyone wanting to get involved in the LAF to look at our website (www.essexlaf.co.uk) where details of meeting times and membership opportunities can be found.

On a personal note it is with some sadness that I have to leave the forum due to other commitments. I would like to thank all those friends I have made over the last three years as Chairman and wish the forum and new Chairman, Mick Brash, well for the future.



Simon Gibson
Chair Essex LAF



INTRODUCTION

The Local Access Forum for Essex was established by Essex County Council (the Appointing Authority) in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

As required by 'The Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2002' this is the second Annual Report of the Local Access Forum for Essex which I have pleasure in submitting to the County Council as the appointing authority.

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The Local Access Forum for Essex covers the whole of Essex excluding the unitary authorities of Southend and Thurrock.

Thurrock Unitary Authority has established a Local Access Forum.

MEMBERSHIP

The Local Access Forum for Essex was started in August 2003 in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

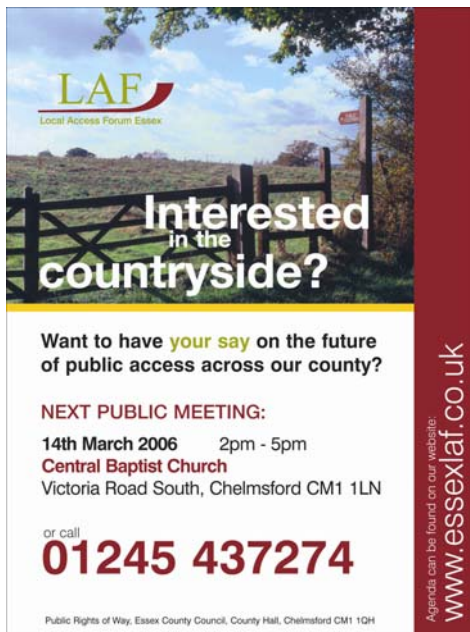
Out of the 16 members 10 members were up for re-election after having stood as members for the last 3 years. 4 members decided not to stand opening the way for 4 new members to be appointed to the forum. This is a natural progression towards the rolling programme of membership in line with the guidance.

At the September meeting Mr Simon Gibson stood down as chairman. The new chairman, Mick Brash, was elected. Mrs Nicola Haycroft, vice-chairman, also stood down but a new vice-chairman was not elected at this meeting and will be elected at the next meeting.

Forum members:

Alan Adcock
David Anderson
Kevin Ascott
Michael Brash
David Corke
Bob Drane
Jenny French
Charles Gooch
Lawrence Hammond
Hazel Jarrold
Norman Hunt
Tracy Mann
Susan Patrick
Richard Tattersall
John Victory
Edward Woods

MEETINGS



LAF
Local Access Forum Essex

**Interested
in the
countryside?**

Want to have **your say** on the future
of public access across our county?

NEXT PUBLIC MEETING:
14th March 2006 2pm - 5pm
Central Baptist Church
Victoria Road South, Chelmsford CM1 1LN

or call
01245 437274

Agenda can be found on our website:
www.essexlaf.co.uk

Public Rights of Way, Essex County Council, County Hall, Chelmsford CM1 1QH

The Forum met on 5 occasions during the year and venues were kept to Chelmsford as it was the central location for all members and for members of the public to attend.

Meetings usually last an average of 3 hours. All meetings were held on a Tuesday afternoon from 2 – 5pm. During year 2 the Forum tried holding a summer meeting in the evening to allow more of the public to attend but this was found not to be a success.

In order to encourage networking between the members meetings are followed by tea, coffee and snacks. This has helped gel the members into an enthusiastic and cohesive group.

In accordance with the Guidance, in order to attract the public, meetings are advertised in the local press, on the website and the Agenda and Minutes can be found in all main libraries.

TOPICS DISCUSSED

1. Defra consultations:

Consultation relating to the amendment of the Local Access Forums Regulations By All Reasonable Means – access to the outdoors for disabled people
Outdoors for All? Draft Diversity Action Plan

There have been 3 Defra consultations for discussion and comment. These provoked much debate and discussion and letters were sent to Defra with the Forum's response.

2. Quiet Lanes Presentation

The Quiet Lanes project is being piloted by the Network Management section of Highways and Transportation, Essex County Council. Members were told about the concept and the consultations that were taking place with the people of the Parishes concerned.

3. Countryside Agency report on research on Monitoring Local Authority Provision of Public Rights of Way.

4. Public Questions

A number of questions from the public were taken and were dealt with by Essex County Council.

5. Rights of Way Improvement Plan

The Rights Of Way Improvement Plan is always kept as an Agenda item due to it's importance. Progress in the early part of the year was slow but once the Local Access Forum had been consulted over the questionnaires, this has seen the consultation process move into the public domain and progress has been made.

Members presentations:

It was decided, at the beginning of the last year, that members would give presentations on their representative issues thereby engendering better understanding by other members of the Forum. 3 talks took place last year, however so far this year we have had only 1 as the Agendas have been too full.

Access for All? Was a presentation given by Susan Patrick on mobility issues.

SITE VISITS



Members attended a site visit to the Flitch Way Country Park. Flitch Way is a linear route which was resurfaced and upgraded to a bridleway with money from a government grant. The Country Park Ranger was on hand to explain the workings of the park to members. A series of controversial gates and barriers was discussed and the Forum

agreed to write to Cllr Bass regarding a blocked bridge on the route.

The benefits of having site visits are seen in the way that the members have a greater understanding of the issues effecting PRow officers on the ground.

BUDGET

Venue – hire and catering (5 meetings)	£ 1 233.00
Site Meeting expenses	£ 65.40
PAGE Media Group	£ 1 587.39
Meeting Adverts for Year 3	£ 3 600.00
Adverts for applications for Year 3	£ 3 046.00
Members expenses	£ 976.62
TOTAL	£10 508.41

THE FUTURE

Involvement in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan will form a key part of our role over the coming year.

The Government is changing the areas of remit for LAF's to include coastal areas and waterways. As with any Forum, as membership changes the areas of interest and concern change and we can expect the LAF to develop and respond to new challenges as they arise.

